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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet describes briefly the process of restructuring a traditional educational program into an individualized program in an industrial area school district. A four-quarter plan was designed to replace the traditional 2-semester system, with the objective of encouraging greater learning experiences for all the children of the district. With Federal aid, the school district has restructured its curriculum for and built a new education complex to house all students K-12 and to accommodate the new program. (MLF)

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THE "THREE PLUS" SYSTEM

ROCHESTER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
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The Rochester Area School District is located along the Ohio River approximately twenty-five miles below Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It is in the heart of the industrial valley stretching from Pittsburgh to East Liverpool, Ohio. Because of its location in Beaver County, the Rochester Area has been referred to as the "hub." Main highway and rail routes cross the river at or near Rochester.

The population of the school district numbers approximately 11,000 residents, and many ethnic groups are represented in this figure. The population growth of the area has been holding fairly constant over the past few years. A decline of the population has occurred in the Borough of Rochester, the oldest community in the school district, but this decline has been offset by a gain in neighboring Rochester Township. The other municipality, East Rochester Borough, has experienced no great change in population figures.

Geographically, the school district covers approximately five square miles. The terrain is hilly with few flat surface areas. Industrial and commercial ventures are located near the shore of the Ohio and Beaver rivers and, as one would proceed away from the rivers, residential areas are predominant. The greater the distance away from the rivers, the greater the decrease in density of population. The outer edges of the Rochester Area School District are approximately two miles from the river.

In 1960, the Rochester Borough received funding through the Urban Renewal program and, as a result, launched a massive effort to revitalize the commercial importance of the community. Large retail shopping centers and a highway network were

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located and this served to challenge the community to do "great and better" things.

Accordingly, the school district set forth to restructure its educational program to meet the challenges of the times. Even though school authorities were hampered by limited, antiquated, and overcrowded facilities, meaningful and significant changes did occur. The high school abandoned the "academic, commercial, general" track programs and institited, instead, programs leaning to nongradedness. Modular scheduling was also introduced. Most important, however, an awareness and interest to change educational opportunities were aroused in the school and community.

In 1966, this interest received a boost when the federal government announced the ESEA Title III Project to fund innovative and challenging programs in education. Accordingly, the district filed for, and received, approval for its project, and this grant launched the district into a study to restructure its entire curriculum K-12 and to plan for new facilities which were needed to accommodate the emerging educational program.

With the willingness of the communities and the school district to respond to the challenge of improvement, coupled with the knowledge and information of new national educational trends and methods supplied through the efforts of ESEA Title III, the school district, from 1966 to the present date, has restructured its entire curriculum, K-12, and has built a new "education complex" designed to house the new programs. Its decision to expand operations "all year round" came only after the restructuring of the curriculum and the construction of a new modern facility made it virtually impossible to take any other course. The educational program, its services, and the facilities were now flexible enough to accommodate any change in the organization of the school year and, as a result, the school dis-

trict in September, 1971, in order to gain more flexibility in time, instituted the four-quarter plan of operations to replace a traditional two-semester system.

The traditional school year for children in Rochester called for 180 days of required attendance. This is in agreement with state regulations. These regulations were made more flexible a few years ago when Pennsylvania relaxed the requirement of 180 days of instruction and substituted in its place a minimum of 990 hours of instruction for secondary students and 900 hours for elementary from July 1 to June 30.

Prior to September, 1971, all children were required to attend school for 180 days; the school year was divided into two semesters with the first semester beginning approximately September 1 and ending late in January. The second semester and the school year usually ended the first week of June. Scattered throughout the school year were the traditional holidays for Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and usually one or two inservice days.

Recognizing that parents were concerned about any change in the school calendar that would affect their normal and routine yearly patterns--holidays, vacations, work schedules, etc.--the district adopted a 240-day school calendar that basically held to the traditional operations yet permitted greater flexibility at the school level. "Feedback" to the school from the community several years ago indicated that any change in the calendar must be gradual and must show the community that this flexible school year program also permitted greater flexibility for parents to break away from their routine schedules as well. The decision to implement the 60-day quarter concept also was based on the fact that attendance records for the district as outlined by the state were kept on 60-day blocks of time; a credit of work at

the high school level was usually based on 120 clock hours of instruction, and this number could be divided into three equal smaller units. Experience also had shown that more could be accomplished in shorter blocks of time than in the longer.

Accordingly, the following school calendar was adopted for the 1971-72 year:

First Quarter - August 30 - November 23
Second Quarter - November 24 - March 2
Third Quarter - March 7 - June 1
Fourth Quarter - June 5 - August 25

Normal holidays were maintained, and an additional "break" was provided between the second and third quarters.

All students were required to attend the first three quarters for the 1971-72 school year, and the fourth quarter was optional. Beginning in 1972-73, however, students must attend any three quarters. This was done to permit the district to move slowly into extended-year operations. For this reason, the district has named its extended school year the "three plus" plan. Students must attend any three quarters, and they may also elect to attend any portion, or all, of an additional quarter.

The major objective of the extended operations is to permit and encourage greater learning experiences for all children of the district. As mentioned, in 1966, the Rochester Area School District was awarded an ESEA Title III grant that made it possible for the district to study and implement new content and procedures in its educational program. Prior to that time, the high school program was, to a degree, nongraded and was offering semester-length courses in the academic areas of English and science. With the assistance of the federal grant under Title III, the district

undertook a complete revision of its educational program K-12 and instituted in the Primary (K-4) and Intermediate (5-8) divisions a "continuous learning" approach that was based on the use of performance objectives. Adopting the philosophy of providing an educational program for the child rather than fitting a child into the program, it soon became evident that if a child progressed according to his own abilities and achievements--his learning being a continuous thing--then the significance of "covering so much" in a certain period of time diminished. Wherever a child stopped in his learning continuum, whether it be at Christmas or during the summer, at that point he again would continue to proceed. Individualizing the program of instruction at the Primary and Intermediate levels provided a clue for extending the educational program for twelve months without the traditional concern for the number of hours a subject would be taught per day, days per week, materials to be covered, etc. A nongraded approach based on performance objectives concerns itself not with what is taught, but rather, with what is learned. When learning is the objective, time is not an important factor.

Individualizing the educational program has taken a different approach at the Secondary level. A complete elective program was provided with students selecting, using proper guidance and approvals, the courses they wished to follow. The courses normally taught for 180- or 90-day blocks of time were restructured for scheduling within a quarter system. By going to the quarter system, the district is now offering 187 courses for all Secondary students. Ninety-two were offered previously. All courses were planned utilizing faculty and student suggestions. A listing of all courses available for 1971-72 to the 900 Secondary students is attached.

New techniques in teaching were also studied and implemented. Teacher team planning, large-

group instruction, small-group instruction, use of paraprofessionals, television and audio learning systems, independent study, flexible and modular scheduling are all concepts and practices that have been in operation in the Rochester Schools since 1966. Again, if these practices can, and are encouraged to, operate during a traditional two-semester school year of 180 days, why cannot these same practices be employed during a four-quarter year? The door was again opening for establishing the mechanics under which an extended school year program could operate at the Secondary level.

Probably one factor that played an important role in the district's decision to operate on an extended schedule was the construction of a new educational complex housing all children in the district, K-12. Prior to September, 1971, the school district had three primary schools, an intermediate school and a junior-senior high school. A parochial school that formerly had 400 students, 1-8, enrolled, closed operations in 1970, and the school district leased that facility for the school year 1970-71. All of the buildings, excluding the junior-senior high school, were obsolete and in need of major renovation. The junior-senior high school, occupied in 1961, was designed to accommodate 900 students, but a school enrollment of 1,100, plus increased curriculum offerings, necessitated additional construction.

Since the junior-senior high school was located in the geographic and population center of the district, the decision was made to construct an educational complex on the 23-acre site. This complex would house all children K-12 and would be designed to accommodate the educational program described previously. The "open space" concept was employed to permit greater flexibility in building use and in the operation of the educational program. Realizing that the new facility

would serve the citizens of the Rochester Area for many years to come, the district installed air conditioning throughout most areas of the complex. Zone controls were provided so that only portions or all of the complex would require heating or cooling, and this would be at the demands of the educational program. The district occupied the new facility in September, 1971, and retired all operations at other buildings.

The new complex serves as a community center as well. Rochester, being an old river community, lacks proper recreational spaces for all segments of the population. Along with the instructional spaces provided in the new complex, the site also contains a stadium with track, four tennis courts, a baseball field, two softball fields, and two basketball courts. In addition, the swimming pool has been constructed to permit twelve-month use. The opportunity exists for a dovetailing of educational and recreational activities on a year-round basis and thus make "school" more attractive.

One can see, then, that the development of the Rochester "three plus" system was an outgrowth of a restructure of the educational program and the construction of a new modern facility designed to accommodate this program. It is not a program that merely adds to a 180-day school year. It is a new concept in the school year itself.

Financing the new program naturally presents a problem! Since the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania reimburses local districts for instructional expenses incurred during a 180-day year only, any costs beyond that must be borne by the local district. There is pending legislation recently introduced into the state legislature to increase support beyond the 180 days. The Rochester Area is not considered a wealthy area. The tax base is solid, however, and it is expected that this base will continue to grow. The district fully intends to be extremely cautious in its undertaking of extended-year operations.

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The major part of any additional expenses would involve instructional costs. Because of the location of the new complex within the boundaries of the district, transportation is not a major problem. At present, there is little reason to be concerned about increased maintenance costs. Operational costs would increase some but this would primarily be for lighting and air conditioning equipment. Since these operations have been zoned to operate as the educational program dictates, these expenses should fluctuate according to the demand of the program.

Relative to instructional costs, the district has entered into a contract with its teachers to reimburse them for any services performed beyond the 180-day school year. The contract stipulates that additional work will be paid according to the "daily rate" in effect for each employee. The "daily rate" is the salary per year as provided in the contract divided by 180 days. All teachers, librarians, nurses, and guidance counselors who are employed will be paid 100% of their daily rate if they work seven hours per day with an assigned schedule; 75% of their daily rate if they work six hours per day without an assigned schedule; and their earnings will be prorated according to the daily rate if they work less than the required hours. Payments for inservice sessions are determined separately.

Only those personnel who have met full certification requirements for the district and Commonwealth will be given an opportunity to work more than, or less than, the required three quarters. Staff will be hired according to the demands of the educational program. Since the district intends to move into extended operations slowly, the ability of the district to finance extended operations will also determine the extent these operations will be carried out.

As far as problems relative to extracurricular activities are concerned, the district be-

lieves these are insufficient to serve as a deterrent for extended operations. Since attendance at any one quarter is optional, it becomes a problem for the family to decide if "Johnny" misses athletics. With the restructuring of the educational program, especially at the Secondary level, interest clubs (photography, astronomy) have now become part of the curriculum and are offered as quarter courses. Since all recreational facilities are located on one site, intramurals should be scheduled with little difficulty.

No doubt, as the district has more experience with the "three plus" system, there will be other problems that will have to be resolved. The mechanics for operation have been established, however, and the district believes once it can secure appropriate state and federal financing, the extended school year operations in Rochester will have been through the "shakedown cruise" and, as a result, the educational program will be geared to provide increased learning opportunities to the citizens of the Rochester Area.

STUDENT COURSE ELECTIONS
1971-72

BUSINESS EDUCATION

Typing I
Typing II
General Business
Shorthand I
Shorthand II and Transcription
Secretarial Office Practice & Work Exp.
Clerical Office Practice
Bookkeeping I
Bookkeeping II
Business Law
Office Machines
Data Processing
Keypunch
Business English and Communication
Personal Typing
ABC Shorthand
Consumer Economic Problems

COMMUNICATIONS

Ninth Year English
Classical Grammar
Composition
Basic Grammar
Advanced Grammar
Remedial Reading
Modern Media
Science Fiction
Mystery and Suspense
Mythology, Folklore and Legend
Reading and Listening for Pleasure
Short Story I
Short Story II
The Novel I
The Novel II
Oral Communications
Speech Lab

Debate and Reasoning
World Literature I
World Literature II
Minority Literature
English Literature I
English Literature II
American Literature I
American Literature II
Contemporary Literature
Contemporary Drama
Contemporary Poetry
Seminar in Literature
Religious Literature of the West
Creative Writing
Research Paper
Paragraph and Letter Writing
Journalism I
Journalism II
Speed Reading
Spanish I
Spanish II
Spanish III
Spanish IV
Conversational Spanish
French I
French II
French III
French IV
German I
German II
German III
German IV
Latin I
Latin II

DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION

D.E. I Business Organization & Merchandising
D.E. II Marketing, Advertising & Display
Retail Training
Marketing Research & Merchandise Info.
Materials Handling, Traffic & Transportation

FINE ARTS

Ninth Year Chorus
Girls Chorus
A Cappella Choir
Chorale
Correlated Fine Arts
Music Theory
Vocal Techniques
Music History
Secondary Band
Jazz Techniques
Secondary Orchestra
String Techniques
Acting
Costuming and Make-Up
Set Design and Lighting
Art I
Advanced Art
Art Exploration and Specialization
Film-making and Film Appreciation
Secondary Band Camp

MATHEMATICS

Algebra I
Basic Algebra I
Algebra II
Geometry
Trigonometry and Advanced Math
Analytic Geometry and Calculus
General Math I
General Math II
Shop Math
Computer Programming I
Computer Programming II
Laboratory Math
Consumer Mathematics
Modern Math
Business Math
Foundations of Advanced Mathematics
The Mathematics of Matrices

Introductory Statistics and Probability
Basic Algebra I-A

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SAFETY EDUCATION

Physical Education - Male
Swimming - Male
Adapted Physical Education - Male
Physical Education - Female
Swimming - Female
Adapted Physical Education - Female
Health - Male
Health - Female
Safety Education
Driver Training

PRACTICAL ARTS

Industrial Arts Metal Shop - 9
Industrial Arts Metal Shop - 10-12
Welding
Automotive Repair
Industrial Arts Wood Shop - 9
Industrial Arts Wood Shop - 10-12
Carpentry
Home Repairs for Girls
Basic Foods
Basic Sewing
Foods for Family and Friends
Advanced Sewing
Foods Around the World and at Home
Tailoring
Marriage and Family Living
Child Care and Nursery School
Consumer Research and Buying Decisions
Home Decorating
Sewing for Pleasure
Food Specialties for Entertaining
Creative Handcrafts
Bachelor Home Economics

SCIENCE

Earth and Space Science
Science I.P.S.
Biology Lecture
Biology Lab
BSCS Biology Lecture
BSCS Biology Lab
Chemistry
Physics
Advanced Science Seminar
Survey Course in Botany
Human Biology
Heredity and Genetics
Nutrition
Physical Science
Weather and Climate
Advanced Space Science
Astronomy
Survey Course in Vertebrate Zoology
Survey Course in Invertebrate Zoology

SOCIAL STUDIES

United States History to 1865
United States History 1865 to Present
World Cultures
World Geography
Social Psychology
Civil War and Reconstruction
The Great Depression
Minority History
Criminology
Urban Problems
Contemporary U. S. Military History
Conservation and Outdoor Education
Anthropology
Totalitarianism vs. Democracy
U. S. Involvement in Southeastern Asia
African History
Latin American History

TECHNICAL

Fundamentals of Drafting
Machine Design
Architectural Drafting
Architectural Construction
Exploratory Electronics
Basic Electronics
Solid State Electronics